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Durham VA Medical Center
Office of Public Affairs
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508 Fulton Street
Durham NC, 27705
919-824-3769

News Release

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VA Hires Over 1,600 Mental Health Professionals to Meet Goal, Expands Access to Care and Outreach Efforts

Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center Hires 15 New Mental Health Professionals

DURHAM, N.C. – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has met the goal to hire 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in President Obama’s August 31, 2012, Executive Order to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families. The Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) met the local goal to hire an additional 15 new mental health clinicians in support of the nationwide effort.

“We worked diligently to hire qualified mental health clinicians and will continue to actively recruit for any vacant mental health positions so Veterans will get the care they need,” said Dr. John Shelburne, Chief of Staff at the Durham VAMC. The hiring of these positions provides Veterans with timely access to high quality mental health services,” Dr. Shelburne said.

As of May 31, 2013, VA has hired a total of 1,607 mental health clinical providers to meet the goal of 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in the Executive Order. Additionally, VA has hired 2,005 mental health clinical providers to fill existing vacancies.

“Meeting this hiring milestone significantly enhances our ability to improve access to care for those Veterans seeking mental health services and demonstrates our continued commitment to the health and well-being of the men and women who have served the Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Meeting this goal is an important achievement, but we

recognize that we must continue to increase access to the quality mental health care Veterans have earned and deserve.”

VA provides a full range of comprehensive mental health services across the country. In Fiscal Year 2012, more than 1.3 million Veterans received specialized mental health care from VA. This number has risen each year from 927,052 in Fiscal Year 2006. In addition to hiring more mental health professionals, VA is expanding the use of innovative technology to serve Veterans in rural or underserved areas. VA expects to increase the number of Veterans receiving care from tele-mental health services in fiscal year 2013, and has increased the number of Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling and referral services from 233 in 2008 to 300 in 2012.

In November 2011, VA launched an award-winning, national public awareness campaign called Make the Connection, which is aimed at reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health care and informing Veterans, their families, friends, and members of their communities about VA resources. More information on Make the Connection can be found at www.maketheconnection.net.

Mental health professionals interested in seeking employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs can obtain information at www.vacareers.va.gov. Veterans and their families interested in learning more about the mental health services provided by VA can go to www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

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